

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9110
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CINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ/J-2

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 0702

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, BL
SUBJECT: GOB ANNOUNCES IT WILL REESTABLISH UNION FREEDOM AND MEET
WITH POLITICAL PARTIES TO ACHIEVE A "PACIFICATION AGREEMENT"

REF: LA PAZ 474, (NOTAL)

1. INSPIRED BY THE INEVITABLE, THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT INTENDS TO RESTORE FULL LABOR UNION FREEDOMS IMMEDIATELY. THE BOLIVIAN CABINET WILL MEET IN SPECIAL SESSION THE EVENING OF JANUARY 24 AND IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE A DECREE TO THAT EFFECT. THE GOB MOVE IS BEING TAKEN IN THE FACE OF A SPREADING REVOLT AMONGST LABOR UNION MEMBERS AGAINST THEIR GOVERNMENT-NAMED COORDINATORS WHICH BEGAN DURING THE RECENT HUNGER STRIKE (SEE REFTEL) AND IS ALSO INTENDED TO PREEMPT THE ISSUE OF UNION FREEDOMS FROM BECOMING THE NEXT MAJOR CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT. IT SHOULD ALSO EASE THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH RISING WORKER PRESSURES FOR WAGE INCREASES.

2. ANOTHER BOB INITIATIVE, PRESIDENT BANZER'S ANNOUNCEMENT
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JANUARY 18 THAT HE WOULD MEET WITH ALL OF BOLIVIA'S POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS TO REACH A NATIONAL "PACIFICATION AGREEMENT" IS NOT FAIRING SO WELL. THE IDEA OF THE MEETING IS TO ESTABLISH RULES OF THE GAME FOR THE ELECTOR PERIOD IN ORDER TO ASSURE THAT ELECTIONS DO OCCUR. HOWEVER, THE GOB HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO DECIDE ON A FORMAT AND AGENDA FOR SUCH A MEETING, AND SOME POLITICAL PARTIES ARE CONDITIONING THEIR

PARTICIPATION ON FURTHER GOB CONCESSIONS. THE MNR PAZ-ESTENSSORO WING, WHILE INITIALLY DECLARING ITSELF IN FAVOR OF THE IDEA, ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD NOT ATTEND IF THE PRO-GOVERNMENT WING OF THE MNR WERE ALSO INVITED. EXTREMIST PARTIES SUCH AS THE PRIN, POR, AND PCB ARE INSISTING ON A NUMBER OF PRECONDITIONS, INCLUDING RESTORATION OF JUAN LECHIN OQUENDO'S CENTRAL OBRERO BOLIVIANO (COB) AS THE CORE REPRESENTATIVE OF BOLIVIAN WORKER INTERESTS. IT HAS BEGUN TO OCCUR TO GOB OFFICIALS THAT A DIVISIVE AND ARGUMENTATIVE MEETING MIGHT DO MORE TO IMPEDE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS THAN TO FACILITATE IT. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS AT THIS TIME THAT THE GOB INTENDS TO MOVE FORWARD WITH PRESENT PLANS TO HOLD SUCH A MEETINGS IF IT CAN ACHIEVE AGREEMENT FROM THE MAJORITY OF BOLIVIA'S FRACTURED POLITICAL PARTIES.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE EVENTS IS THAT TAKEN ABACK BY THE EFFECTS OF THE RECENT HUNGER STRIKE, WHICH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HANDLED INEPTLY, THE GOB HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE FROM BOTH THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND THOSE OPPOSED TO ELECTIONS. "PRESENCIA", THE LA PAZ DAILY MOST ALIENATED BY THE GOB'S HEAVY-HANDED TACTICS DURING THE HUNGER STRIKE, FULSOMELY PRAISED THE TWO GOB INITIATIVES AND CALLED ON BOLIVIANS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT IT SAID IS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SOW THE SEEDS OF DEMOCRACY. THE BURDEN IS NOW INCREASINGLY ON THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO SHOW THAT THEY CAN BECOME RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPANTS IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS.
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